

31. A system as claimed in Claim 23, in which the remote station includes alternate communication means for communicating with other databases.

5 32. A system for monitoring and identifying vehicles in a plurality of parking zones, the system including

a remote station at which reference identification particulars of vehicles are stored;

10 at least one device for identifying a vehicle parked in one of a plurality of parking zones with which the device is associated, the device including a housing shaped and dimensioned to be hand-held within which is housed:

input means for feeding input identification particulars of a vehicle in a parking zone into the device;

15 communication means for receiving the reference identification particulars from the remote station;

storage means for storing said reference identification particulars;

timing means for timing the duration for which the vehicle is parked in the parking zone;

20 processor means connected to the input means and to the storage means, the processor means including comparator means for comparing the input identification particulars with the reference identification particulars, the processor means being operable to calculate a monetary amount due for parking for said duration in the parking zone so that the device functions as a parking meter;

25 signal generation means for selectively generating a warning signal in response to said comparison;

display means for displaying the monetary amount due; and

monetary receiving means for receiving the monetary amount due.

33. A system as claimed in Claim 32, in which the communication means is a wireless communication means.

34. A system as claimed in Claim 32, in which the monetary receiving means includes card reading means for reading information stored on a card and feeding it to the processor means for processing payment electronically.

35. A system as claimed in Claim 32, in which the input means includes a reader capable of reading a tag device hidden in or on the vehicle in a wireless fashion, the tag device carrying the said identification particulars of the vehicle.

36. A system as claimed in Claim 32, which includes a control centre and a plurality of remote stations at remote locations associated with parking zones, each remote station being in communication with the control centre via a telecommunication network to receive reference identification particulars and each device being in wireless communication with an associated remote station.

37. A system as claimed in Claim 36, in which the telecommunication network is a cellular telephone network.

38. A system as claimed in Claim 37, in which the reference identification particulars are downloaded by means of SMS messaging.

39. A system as claimed in Claim 34, in which the telecommunication network includes the Internet.

40. A system as claimed in Claim 32, in which the remote station includes alternate communication means for communicating with other databases.

41. A method of monitoring and identifying a vehicle in a parking zone, the method including

feeding identification particulars of a vehicle in a parking zone into a hand-held device;

transmitting the identification particulars to a remote station;

comparing said identification particulars of the vehicle in the parking zone with reference identification particulars at the remote station;

selectively generating a warning signal in response to the comparison;

timing the duration for which the vehicle is parked in the parking zone;

calculating a monetary amount due for the said duration; and receiving said monetary amount due.

42. A method as claimed in Claim 41, in which the reference identification particulars are the identification particulars of stolen vehicles.

43. A method as claimed in Claim 41, in which a database for storing reference identification particulars of vehicles is provided in the